

Psalms 77:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.

Analysis

The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven (קול רעמך בגלגל). Ra'am (רעם) is thunder. Galgal (גלגל) literally means wheel or whirlwind—possibly the rolling thunder or the circular motion of the storm. Thunder is God's voice declaring His majesty and power (Job 37:2-5, Psalm 29:3-9). At Sinai, thunder accompanied God's speaking the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19:16, 20:18).

The lightnings lightened the world (האירו ברקים תבל). Baraq (ברק) is lightning. Or (אור) means to give light, illuminate. Tevel (תבל) is the inhabited earth, the world. Lightning flashes illuminated the entire landscape. **The earth trembled and shook** (רגזה ותרעש הארץ). Both ragaz (רגז) and ra'ash (רעש) mean to quake, tremble, shake. The earth itself responds to God's presence with seismic fear. This cosmic upheaval demonstrates that creation recognizes and submits to its Creator.

Historical Context

The combination of thunder, lightning, and earthquake marks major divine interventions: Sinai (Exodus 19:16-18), David's deliverance (2 Samuel 22:8-15 = Psalm 18:7-15), and eschatological judgment (Revelation 8:5, 11:19, 16:18). These phenomena manifest the Creator's power over creation. The exodus climax merges sea-crossing with theophanic imagery, portraying redemption as cosmic transformation. The Psalter uses this language to assure Israel that the God who acted then can act again now.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Why does creation itself (waters, clouds, earth) respond to God's presence with fear and trembling?
2. How should these images of cosmic upheaval inform our understanding of God's power and majesty?
3. How do Christ's resurrection (Matthew 28:2) and return (Matthew 24:27-30) connect to these theophanic phenomena?

Interlinear Text

קוּל	בַּעֲמֻךָ	בְּגִלְגַּל	הָאֵי יָרוּ	בְּרָקֵי יָם	תֵּבֵל
The voice	of thy thunder	was in the heaven	lightened	the lightnings	the world
H6963	H7482	H1534	H215	H1300	H8398
הִתְרַעַרְעַר	וַתִּרְעַר	הָאָרֶץ:			
trembled	and shook	the earth			
H7264	H7493	H776			

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 97:4 (Light): His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled.